

Middle School Initiative

**PART I
COVER SHEET**

CAP 3 SEMESTER 1 WEEK 11

COURSE: Goddard Leadership Laboratory, Achievement 7

LESSON TITLE: Communication Barriers and Non-verbal Communication

LENGTH OF LESSON: 50 Minutes

METHOD: Informal Lecture - Discussion

REFERENCE(S):

1. *Leadership: 2000 And Beyond*, Volume 1, Chapter 7
2. AFPAM 36-2241, Volume 1, *Promotion Fitness Examination Pamphlet*
3. FM 22-100, *US Army Leadership*

AUDIO/VISUAL AIDS/HANDOUTS/ACTIVITY MATERIAL(S): None

COGNITIVE OBJECTIVE: The objective of this lesson is for each cadet to:

1. Master the additional barriers to communication.
2. Understand non-verbal communication and its affect on verbal communication.

COGNITIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR: Each cadet should comprehend the barriers to communication and learn the best means to circumvent them. Additionally, each cadet should learn how to effectively use non-verbal communication methods.

AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVE: N/A

AFFECTIVE SAMPLES OF BEHAVIOR: N/A

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PART II TEACHING PLAN

Introduction

ATTENTION: Good afternoon and welcome to Leadership Laboratory 7.2.

MOTIVATION: *"Duty, Honor, Country: These three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn."* General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, 12 May 1962, US Military Academy, West Point, NY

OVERVIEW: Our lesson today deals with the development of those communication skills that were discussed in Achievement 3. We will review some of the pertinent information from that achievement and add some more information that tends to interfere with our ability to communicate in a clear and concise manner.

TRANSITION: Did you understand the words of General MacArthur? Communication between people is an art that most people cannot master; there are just too many roadblocks in the way.

Body

MP 1 Many months and four achievements ago, we discussed some common barriers to verbal and written communication. Let's look back at those barriers now as a refresher.

First, no common core of experience. The communicators not having the same experiences cause this barrier. Words used by the speaker are alien to the listener at this point.

Second, the confusion between the symbol (word) and the thing being symbolized. Words do not transfer meaning, they are only the symbols we use to transfer information. How you interpret these symbols is what gives the word meaning. As an example, the words for, fore, and four. The first word is spelled "for" - its meaning is known only if it is used in the proper context, for example; "two apples for ten cents." The second word is spelled "fore" and its general definition is to go in front of, or precede something. An example here could be "forearm"; that portion of the arm which is before or in front of the upper arm. The third word is spelled "four" and it implies the Arabic figure 4, a number.

As you can see, words are a stumbling block to communication. Knowing the correct word and using it in the proper way will help you convey your meaning.

Third, use of abstract words. Abstract words sum up vast areas of experience and can mislead the listener. The word "group" can mean one thing to me, and to you it means something else. For example, my connotation of the word means at least two squadrons assigned to a commander at a higher level, whereas this very same word could mean a musical band to you. Being very specific in our use of symbols and the support given them will help us get our meaning across to the listener.

Since leadership is about getting other people to do what you want them to do, it follows that communicating - transmitting information so that it is clearly understood - is an important skill. If you cannot be understood, how will you ever let them know what you want.

MP 2 Since we have overcome some of the elementary barriers to communication, let's look at some additional barriers that may cause you some concern as you progress through the ranks.

First, organizational barriers. There are three levels of organizational communication. They are up, down, and laterally. The orders come down from higher headquarters, the questions go upwards when the orders are not understood, and the workings of the orders can be discussed laterally between units with like experiences. Mission accomplishment depends on information passing accurately to and from subordinates and leaders.

Within each unit there are different grades and positions and each position has a certain level of status. Status is a functional necessity in any formal organization, but over emphasis on status usually becomes a blockage to effective communication. Each one of us must understand our level of status and be able to identify ourselves and our roles in getting the units' job done.

All communications in a military organization must pass through at least two levels of command and in doing so may become delayed and distorted. The flow of communication must be recognized and encouraged - upward, downward, and laterally, otherwise it will break down.

Second, linguistic barriers. Words, at their very best, are poor communication tools and the use of language is extremely difficult to do. We stumble every time we say or write something. Trying to find the proper words, based on our level of learning, to express ourselves is very trying at times. Try the words, "I love you." How you say it, and to whom, means much.

Third, psychological barriers. Previously, we talked about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Once we got past the physiological needs, or biological needs, we ran into those needs that are more psychological or desired by the individual. These needs, such as being safe, belonging or being loved, self-esteem, and self-actualizing, can be a barrier to effective communication. If the information that will satisfy these needs is withheld, then it is quite possible that people will try

to satisfy them in their own fashion. This could lead to the development of cliques and the starting of rumors, which is supposed to fill the information void. Whenever possible, all information necessary to accomplish a mission should be passed on to the members of the unit. Similarly, subordinates are obligated to provide leaders with facts they need to know. There is no reason for people to be in an information vacuum.

Keeping subordinates informed shows trust and will relieve stress. Information also allows subordinates to determine what they need to do to accomplish the mission. By being open, we fulfill our psychological needs.

Overcoming barriers to effective communication requires each of us to increase our reading and writing skills. In doing so, we better prepare ourselves for command. Being able to establish effective communications gives us the opportunity to prescribe channels of communication, define lines of authority and responsibility, and, in general, *keep everyone informed*.

TRANSITION: What I have been covering previously is the act of communicating verbally, either by voice or the written word. There is another form of communication that we all use in our daily lives and that is the act of non-verbal communication.

MP 3 Non-verbal communication, or behavior, is so different from verbal communication that you are seldom aware of it happening. We will look at many of these non-verbal cues that either emphasize or de-emphasize our vocal delivery.

The major non-verbal communication cues are

- Body motion (kinesics)
- Paralanguage
- Use of space
- Physical environment
- Time

Kinesics, or body language and facial expressions, is the type of non-verbal behavior that we usually think about. Body language is not universal in that it is based on the culture of the individual. What we learn in this part of the country may not mean the same as some other part of the country. This also applies to any part of the world. Here, we may whistle to draw the attention of another person, but in Vietnam, it has an impolite purpose. Our eyes may express some of our emotions between individuals. The degree of this eye contact says much between the transmitter and the receiver.

Paralanguage refers to "how you say what you say." It takes into consideration the volume of the voice, rate of speech, and insertion of the verbal pause that many people use, like "uh" or "um," instead of shutting their mouth and thinking about what to say next. Although paralanguage is vocal, it really has no logical word content.

Use of space, or proxemics, is based on territoriality. This is my space and you better not step into it. Man is territorial in nature just like all other mammals. Space can be broke down into three types: fixed feature, semi-fixed feature, and personal.

Fixed feature space refers to those things that are considered as immovable, such as this building. Semi-fixed space is that which can be rearranged, such as the student desks in a classroom of this building. If we move the desks into a circle, instead of the straight row design, wouldn't we improve our means of communicating with one another?

Personal space is much more exciting. We have four zones to consider. First is the intimate space - - up to one and one-half feet where we allow only the closest of friends and family to enter. Next is the personal distance space - - outwards to four feet where we conduct much of our personal business with friends and associates. The third space is our social distance of four to 12 feet - - good for general business requirements. Lastly comes the public distance space - - beyond 12 feet where we are at this moment.

Connecting the verbal and non-verbal means of communication describes the effect you will have on your receivers. If you say one thing and your non-verbal acts are contrary to your words, your receivers will get mixed messages. Look out for the negative non-verbal actions as they are the ones that most people will act upon.

Conclusion

SUMMARY: In summation, we have discussed the pitfalls of verbal and non-verbal communication; those being the proper use of understandable words linked to the non-verbal activity that is associated with speaking. What it all amounts to is simple - say what you have to say in the simplest terms possible and emphasize those words with the correct non-verbal activity.

REMOTIVATION: *"Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; the cauliflower is nothing but a cabbage with a college education."* Mark Twain

CLOSURE: Next week we will discuss the making of a cadet officer. Be prepared to have some input on what makes a good cadet officer. Class is dismissed.

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**PART III
LESSON REVIEW**

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S): The objective of this lesson was for each cadet to understand some of the additional barriers to effective communication and the methods to overcome them.

LESSON QUESTIONS: Completion of the chapter review exercise satisfies this requirement.